

### Amendments to the Claims

The following Listing of Claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the above-referenced application.

1-13. (Canceled)

14. (Currently Amended) Method of promoting growth in an animal, ~~said method~~ comprising the step of:

feeding ~~said~~ the animal with ~~an effective amount of~~ an F4+ non-pathogenic *Escherichia coli* strain in an amount effective to promote growth in the animal.

15. (Currently Amended) Method of homogenizing growth among a herd of animals, ~~said method~~ comprising the step of:

feeding ~~said~~ the animals with ~~an effective amount of~~ an F4+ non-pathogenic *Escherichia coli* strain in an amount effective to homogenize growth among the herd.

16. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 14 or 15, wherein the step of feeding comprises feeding orally ~~animal is fed orally.~~

17. (Currently Amended) The method according to ~~any one of claims 14 to~~ claim 16, wherein the step of feeding comprises feeding ~~animal is fed with~~ the F4+ non-pathogenic *Escherichia coli* strain in association with an acceptable carrier, wherein the carrier is selected from the group consisting of a solid feed acceptable carrier or a liquid feed acceptable carrier, or combinations thereof.

18. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 17, wherein the carrier comprises a solid feed acceptable carrier is comprising a common solid feedstuff.

19. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 17, wherein the carrier comprises a liquid feed acceptable carrier is comprising water.

20. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 17, wherein the carrier comprises a liquid feed acceptable carrier is comprising milk.

21. (Currently Amended) ~~The method according to any one of claims~~ The method of claim 14 or 15 to 20, wherein the effective amount is at least about ~~5<sup>E7</sup>~~ 5x10<sup>7</sup> CFU of F4+ non-pathogenic *Escherichia coli* strain per animal.

22. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim ~~17~~ 14 or 15, wherein the effective amount ranges from about ~~5<sup>E7</sup>~~ 5x10<sup>7</sup> to about ~~5<sup>E9</sup>~~ 5x10<sup>9</sup> CFU of F4+ non-pathogenic *Escherichia coli* strain per animal.

23. (Currently Amended) ~~The method according to any one of claims~~ The method of claim 14 or 15 to 22, wherein the F4+ non- pathogenic *Escherichia coli* strain consists of the *Escherichia coli* strain deposited at the International Depository Authority of Canada (IDAC) on January 21,2005 under accession number IDAC 210105-01, mutants or variants thereof.

24. (Currently Amended) ~~The method according to any one of claims~~ The method of claim 14 to 23, wherein the animal is selected from the group consisting of a post-weaning animal, ~~and a post-hatching animal, and combinations thereof.~~

25. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 24, wherein the animal is a post-weaning animal is aged from about 10 to about 28 days old.

26. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 24, wherein the animal is a post-hatching animal is aged from about 1 to about 7 days old.

27. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 24 ~~or 25~~, wherein the animal is a post-weaning ~~animal is a~~ pig.

28. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 24 ~~or 25~~, wherein the animal is a post-weaning ~~animal is a~~ mouse.

29. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 24 ~~or 26~~, wherein the animal is a post-hatching ~~animal is~~ poultry animal.

30. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 29, wherein the poultry animal is a chicken.

31. (New) The method of claim 15, wherein the animals of the herd are selected from the group consisting of a post-weaning animal, a post-hatching animal, and combinations thereof.

32. (New) The method according to claim 31, wherein the animals are post-weaning animals aged from about 10 to about 28 days old.

33. (New) The method according to claim 31, wherein the animals are post-hatching animals aged from about 1 to about 7 days old.

34. (New) The method according to claim 31, wherein the animals are post-weaning pigs.

35. (New) The method according to claim 31, wherein the animals are post-weaning mice.

36. (New) The method according to claim 31, wherein the animals are post-hatching poultry animals.

37. (New) The method according to claim 36, wherein the poultry animals are chickens.